

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for increasing perceived access speed to content available from a data network, comprising:
 - selecting data to be sent to multicast groups based on a predetermined policy; and
 - sending the data over the multicast channel.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein data network is an internet, an extranet, an intranet, a VPN, or a LAN.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the predetermined policy is selecting data based on information from an agent that monitors web hits from the system clients.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the predetermined policy is to send promotional content such as a bundle of computer executable game files.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the predetermined policy is that the group data is taken directly from a unicast stream.
6. A method for increasing perceived access speed to content available from a data network, comprising:
 - selecting data to be sent over a shared multicast channel;
 - sending the data over the multicast channel;
 - receiving the data;
 - filtering the data;
 - storing the filtered data in a local cache; and
 - retrieving the filtered data from the cache for user consumption.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein selecting comprises selecting data based on predetermined policies.
8. The method of claim 7, wherein the predetermined policy is to send the top 100 web file downloads.
9. The method of claim 7, wherein the predetermined policy is to send promotional content such as a bundle of computer executable game files.
10. The method of claim 6, wherein receiving comprises receiving the data by a reception agent.
11. The method of claim 6 further comprising storing the data after it has been selected.
12. The method of claim 6, wherein filtering the data includes filtering the data based on a user configured profile.
13. The method of claim 11, wherein storing comprises sending the selected content to a shared cache.
14. A method for increasing perceived access speed to content available from a data network, comprising:
 - measuring user demand for data;
 - selecting data to be sent over a shared multicast channel based upon said user demand;
 - sending the selected data over the multicast channel;
 - receiving the selected data;
 - filtering the selected data;
 - storing the filtered data in a local cache; and
 - retrieving the filtered data from the cache for user consumption.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein some clients are in a passive state.
16. The method of claim 14 further comprising: storing the data after it has been selected.
17. The method of claim 14, wherein the act of selecting data to be sent over a shared multicast channel comprises selecting data based on web hits.
18. A method for increasing perceived access speed to content available from a data network, comprising:

measuring user demand for data using a web proxy;

selecting data to be sent over a shared multicast channel based upon said user demand;

sending the selected data over the multicast channel;

receiving the selected data;

filtering the selected data;

storing the filtered data in a local cache; and

retrieving the filtered data from the cache for user consumption.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein some clients are in a passive state.
20. The method of claim 18, wherein the filtering is performed by a reception agent.
21. A method for increasing perceived access speed to content available from a data network, comprising:

measuring user demand for data;

selecting data to be sent over a shared multicast channel based upon said user demand;

receiving the selected data;

storing the selected data in a local cache;
using a local web proxy for storing additional data; and
retrieving the selected data from the cache for user consumption.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein measuring user demand includes using an agent to monitor the web hits of the system clients.

23. An apparatus for improving a user's perceived access speed to data network content, comprising:

a memory having program code stored therein; and
a processor connected to said memory for carrying out instructions in accordance with stored program code;
wherein said program code, when executed by said processor, causes said processor to perform the steps of:

- a) receiving a user input request for data from a data network; and
- b) determining whether said requested data is to be retrieved from the local cache or the data network; and
- c) retrieving said requested data for user consumption.